

How to tell a new hire they didn't make it past probation

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By Nick Patch | January 24, 2017 | Human Resources



No matter how rigorous the hiring process, sometimes things go sour with a freshly hired prospect. Maybe your prized new hire does not live up to the extensive promises made in a charming job interview, or maybe a personality issue has emerged that wasn't obvious before. Whatever the reason, it just isn't working.

The good news is that the probation system was put in

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To ease the process, here's how to tell a new hire they didn't make it past probation.

1. **Start evaluating early**

No new employee should ever be completely blind-sided with the news that their performance isn't cutting it. From the very beginning, new employees should have a clear handle on exactly what's expected of them and whether they're meeting those expectations. "If you're telling them at the end of probation that it's not working out, it's way too late," said [Clear HR Consulting](#) Principal Consultant Cissy Pau.

2. **Rewind the interview**

If the employee isn't performing as predicted, make sure your standards are reasonable. Look back at your underachieving hire's application materials and your notes from the interview. Is there really a gap between the employee's promised skillset and actual toolbox? Or are you asking for too much? It's entirely possible that your expectations are unrealistic. It could also be that your onboarding program has not sufficiently prepared the new hire for the job. [Click here for our free Guide to Onboarding for SMBs.](#)

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door to a dialogue, and gives your under-performing rookie the opportunity to explain if there are obstacles to their success that you could help with.

4. **Train, train, train**

Everyone learns differently, and it's possible that your new hire simply missed a few crucial steps in the training process. Perhaps the person's simply too shy, embarrassed, or overwhelmed to admit that there's a crucial skill lacking? You can ensure that the new hire has all the tools needed to succeed by reviewing the training process, and if in doubt, providing a refresher.

5. **Write it all down**

So, additional training and talking hasn't helped get your new employee on track? It's important then to keep a written record of all attempts to intervene or improve their performance. Document all your efforts to help the employee, as well as all the evidence that this person simply isn't qualified for the position. "There should be a lot of stuff in writing, clearly indicating that things aren't going as planned," said Gilles Rochefort, president of [PMC Coaching](#).

6. **Warn the employee**

If someone's not working out, "you almost have to tell



pass probation.' You need to be coaching them along so it comes as no surprise in the end because they've been told throughout they might not continue if they don't perform better." Not only is it simply the empathetic thing to do, the cautionary talk might be just the thing to kick-start their performance.

7. Consider your options

Ultimately, termination isn't the only possible path for an employee who is struggling to hit the ground running. If there are signs of improvement, you might consider extending the probation period. Or perhaps the employee is better suited to a different position within the company. "There are more options than just, 'you didn't make probation so you're fired,'" Pau said. "Ultimately, regardless of whether you terminate their employment or extend their probation, we absolutely recommend following up in writing with a letter that explains the situation."

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